

GALACTIC COIN DEALER ■ SUMMER SEMINAR CATALOG ■ LINCOLN CENT ERROR

# The Numismatist

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## U.S. PROOF COINS, PART 2

*A Brief History, Continued*

## REICH'S INDIAN PEACE MEDAL

*A Chance Encounter & an Iconic Design*

## THE SILVER PLUGS OF AVELLINE

*Coins of the  
Mascarene Islands*

## LATIN AMERICAN HISTORY

*Cross of Distinction*

Medals were awarded in 1818 to the Spanish Army of Peru.

➤ The Spanish American wars of independence broke out shortly after Napoleon invaded Spain in 1808. The Napoleonic assault sparked the Creoles (those of European descent born in America) in Spanish colonies to fight for independence. Peru, however, was home to many Spanish aristocrats, and Peruvian authorities remained loyal to the Spanish crown. A large contingent of Spanish military personnel was concentrated in Lima and effectively suppressed many uprisings by indigenous peoples. Peru would achieve its independence from Spain primarily with the aid of outsiders.

General José de San Martín of Argentina aimed to secure Argentine control of Upper Peru's silver from the Spanish forces occupying the area. His objective was to ensure Argentina's independence by destroying the remaining Spanish

power in South America. Since Argentine troops previously had been defeated in Upper Peru, San Martín's strategy was to surround the Spaniards by first liberating Chile and using it as a military base to plan an attack by sea. He successfully freed Chile in 1818, and a naval fleet was readied. San Martín occupied the Peruvian port of Pisco in September 1820. Later, the viceroy of Peru withdrew his forces and retreated into the interior of the country. San Martín entered Lima and on July 28, 1821, declared Peru's independence.

However, San Martín lacked the military strength to overcome the Spanish stronghold in the interior, and he sought help from Venezuelan general Simón Bolívar, who had liberated northern South America. Refusing to share leadership, Bolívar declined the request and San Martín was forced

The First Chilean Navy Squadron raided Spanish ships and contributed to the liberation of Peru. Shown here is its departure from Chile on October 9, 1818.



PAINTING: WIKIPEDIA.ORG

to withdraw his troops. Bolívar assumed power in Peru and carried on the struggle for liberation. The Venezuelan military leader was victorious in the battles of Junín (August 6, 1824) and Ayacucho (December 9, 1824) and ultimately broke Spain's control of Peru, thus ensuring the nation's independence.

### Military Medal

Spanish authorities in Peru decided to give medals of distinction to the Royal Army of Peru and requested permission to do so from the king, who gave his approval. The Medal of Distinction of the Royal Army of Peru is suspended from a colorful ribbon: the central vertical stripe is white, followed by yellow on both sides, and red on the ends. Author Antonio Prieto Barrio described the medal and gave the following brief account of its inception.

General José de la Serna observed that Peruvian officers were from the country's corps. They did not carry shields and crosses of distinction for battles fought on the Iberian Peninsula and began to show little appreciation for those they had obtained for acts of bravery in America. De la Serna wanted to create a distinction named the Cross of the Field of Honor, which would replace the medal of San Fernando, whose delays, caused by the issuance of certificates, rendered its meaning useless. Brigadier Pedro Antonio de Oláñeta, a Royalist commander in the Spanish army, was the first to obtain this decoration. He was also declared ex officio president of the council that would adjudicate these distinctions in the future. According to Prieto Barrio, very little is known about this medal.

### Primary Source

To reconstruct the history of this medal, I relied on the minimal manuscripts found in the General Archive of the Indies in Seville, Spain. I transcribed the letter in which the

king granted permission to award medals to Spanish soldiers in Peru. I have been able to locate only one manuscript regarding the issuing of the award, the text of which I have translated into English.

The secretary of state and of the war office wrote the following, dated July 16:

Excellent sir, to the viceroy of Peru I say the following on this date. I have informed the king our lord of your excellency's letter of April 29, [1]817 number 202 in which he temporarily approved the cross of distinction that Field Marshal Don José de la Serna, who commands the Army of the Upper Peru, believed convenient to save military ranks and reward individuals from his army who exhibit a distinguished merit. His majesty has seen fit to approve the aforementioned cross arranged in the form and manner of the attached designs. The individual of the Army of Upper Peru who performs a distinguished action will be granted said decoration, and a diploma will be issued in the name of the general in command of the army, authorized by your excellency's signature. Having satisfied this requirement, the generals will deliver this award to the interested party and explain why this distinction has been given, which will be noted



on his service sheet.

I offer this to your honor for your knowledge and consequent effects, for which purpose I am including a design of the said decoration.

God keep your lordship for many years.

Madrid, August 14, 1818.  
[Diego Ballesteros] Mr. Don

Very little is known about this cross of distinction that was awarded to the Peruvian army for meritorious service and loyalty to Spain.

Juan Juez Deputy Inspector of Cavalry of the Expeditionary Army of Costa Firme (Caracas)

### Conclusion

Very little is known about the history of this medal design, partly because the Creoles destroyed many documents and objects related to Spanish authorities during and after the war. Nevertheless, I believe it is a fascinating piece of numismatics found in Seville's General Archive of the Indies.

### Acknowledgment

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—Angel O. Navarro Zayas, Ph.D.

ILLUSTRATION: GENERAL ARCHIVE OF THE INDIES

## IN MEMORIAM “Toonie” Tribute

*A new Canadian \$2 coin  
honors Britain’s late queen.*

The Royal Canadian Mint has issued a black-ringed \$2 coin (a “toonie”) to commemorate Queen Elizabeth II, who died in September 2022. Nearly 5 million of these issues entered circulation in late December.

While the composition of the \$2 coin remains unchanged from

previous issues, the piece features a black ring around a gold central design. Susanna Blunt's effigy of the late queen appears on the obverse, along with inscriptions for her name, the year, and D • G • REGINA (“by the grace of God, the Queen”). The reverse bears Brent Townsend's design of a polar bear in a snowy landscape. Around the rim are inscriptions for the denomination and the issuing country, plus two maple leaf motifs.

Queen Elizabeth II served as Canada's head of state for 70 years, and she visited the

country more than any other during her reign. Following her death, Canada observed a 10-day mourning period.

Royal Canadian Mint Chief Executive Marie Lemay says that Queen Elizabeth was the only monarch most Canadians had ever known, and that “our special \$2 circulation coin offers Canadians a way to remember her.” Visit [mint.ca](http://mint.ca) for more information.



Actual Size: 28mm